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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Thomas Burr Appointed Director of NYS Agricultural Experiment Station

By Linda McCandless

ITHACA, NY: Signaling the start of a new era at the Geneva Experiment Station, Thomas J. Burr has been appointed associate dean of Cornell University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and director of the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station (NYSAES) in Geneva, NY, effective January 1, 2005.

"Tom's demonstrated accomplishments in leading the plant pathology department at Geneva have provided him the experience and perspective he needs to set a new strategic vision for Geneva in collaboration with faculty, staff, stakeholders, and state and community leaders," said Susan A. Henry, the Ronald P. Lynch dean of Agriculture and Life Sciences. "The entire college joins me in congratulating Tom and expressing our strongest support of his commitment to helping Geneva respond to the challenges facing our food and agricultural industries."

The new director greeted the news saying, "I am extremely honored to have been selected. One of my main goals will be to work with the Station faculty, staff and stakeholders on issues that are of vital importance to the food and agriculture industries of New York. We have highly productive and dedicated employees who are committed to meeting the challenges that face us in the future."

Burr replaces Robert C. Seem, who has served as interim director of the Station since January 1, 2004, and James E. Hunter, who served as director from 1990-2003. In making the announcement, Dean Henry said, "We are very grateful to Jim Hunter and Bob Seem for their dedication, leadership and hard work in keeping the Station strong during difficult budgetary times."

Turning to the road ahead, Burr expects landmark developments in molecular biology, genomics, and associated technologies to offer a wealth of opportunities for investigating agricultural issues, and web-based and video-conferencing technologies to be important in how stakeholders, scientists, and students receive and disseminate information.

Other new developments that Burr said will contribute to the future success of the NYSAES include the expansion of the USDA-ARS Plant Genetic Resources Unit (PGRU) at Geneva and the construction of the Cornell Agriculture & Food Technology Park (CAFTP). "The PGRU is a growing group of scientists who add greatly to the overall quality and productivity of the college's research programs," said Burr. Speaking of the park, he noted, "As new businesses come to the park, they will provide opportunities for interaction with faculty and staff members from Cornell and other nearby academic institutions, and add to the economic vitality of surrounding communities."

A member of the Cornell faculty since 1977, Burr has served as chairman of the department of plant pathology at the NYSAES since 2001. Burr has made substantial contributions in advancing research on plant diseases that are of local and worldwide importance, conducting research and extension on the biology and control of bacterial pathogens that affect fruit crops, particularly grapes. His major emphasis is the study and

Pictures are linked to hi-res scans



Thomas J. Burr

control of crown gall, a disease that infects grapevines especially after they have been injured by freezing temperatures. Researchers in his program examine traditional methods of control as well as biological control and genetic technologies that confer resistance to host plants.

Burr received a B.S. in agricultural science and a M.S. in plant pathology from the University of Arizona in 1971 and 1973, respectively. He received his Ph.D. in plant pathology from the University of California-Berkeley in 1977. He was appointed assistant professor at Cornell in 1977, associate professor in 1983, and professor in 1991. He is a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and the American Phytopathological Society (APS). He was named a fellow of APS in 1997, having received the APS's Ciba-Geigy Award in 1986 and Lee M. Hutchins Award in 1990. Burr lives in Geneva with his wife, Judy, who also works at the Experiment Station. They have three grown children.

Robert Seem will remain at Geneva as professor of plant pathology and return to active participation in his research program. He will also continue to serve as president of the CAFTP board of directors.

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